

VA-YAC

VIRGINIA YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

SUPPORT VA-YAC, GET INVOLVED TODAY

New to VA-YAC and want to get involved? Here's how.

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GETTING READY FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

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VA-YAC
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FALL 2006

BACK TO SCHOOL EDITION

The program makes services available to youth in foster care and increases assistance for young people ages 16-21, who have aged out of care. Services are based on individual needs, interests, abilities and goals to promote each youth's efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.

I learned how to apply for college and adjust to campus life, how to respect others, how to be a team player, and how to be independent.

William P.
VA-YAC Participant

The program's goals are to help foster care youth become STARS by achieving:

- Self-sufficiency
- Transition
- Accountability
- Reliability
- Stability

Who's Eligible?

Services are available to young people, ages 16-21, who have been or are in foster care. Those younger than 16 may be included in Independent Living Program activities as appropriate, as determined by the local departments of social services.

Each young person must have a written transitional independent living plan that is based on



FOSTER CARE STARS!

VIRGINIA INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

The Independent Living Program provides young people in foster care with the basic living skills, education and employment preparation they need to become self-supporting adults.

their individual needs. They also must also participate directly in designing his or her program activities and must accept personal responsibility for achieving independence.

What Services are Available?

- High school assistance
- Post secondary / vocational assistance
- Life skills training
- Health education
- Case management, assessment and referral services
- Career exploration and planning
- Independent living stipend
- Job readiness training
- Housing assistance
- Youth advocacy
- Mentoring

What Educational Costs are Funded?

Secondary (High) School Expenses

- Summer or evening school fees
- Independent living life skills training and workshops
- Books, supplies, tools, equipment and uniforms
- Tutoring
- Graduation fees

- Driver's education, post-secondary school or Vocational Training expenses
- Application fees, registration fees
- Tuition, college-related expenses
- Possibly room and board
- Books and course supplies
- Tutoring for tests (SAT, ACT, etc.)

All expenses must be pre-approved by local departments of social services and are subject to the availability of funds.

What Additional Programs are Available?

Independent Living Educational/Vocational Trust Fund

This trust fund assists with expenses for post secondary education or training for Virginia's former foster care youth. Guidelines and applications are available from state and local departments of social services.

Virginia Community College System Tuition Grants

This program provides tuition and fees at Virginia community colleges for high school graduates and those

who have received a general education development (GED) diploma at the time of graduation or completion of the GED, if they were once one of the following:

- In foster care
 - In the custody of a social services agency
 - A special needs adoption
- Information on this program is available online. Go to: www.vccs.edu, click on "Academic Services," then "Financial Aid" and go to "Virginia Information for VCCS Tuition Grant for Foster Care Recipients."*

Education and Training Vouchers Program

Education and training vouchers of up to \$5,000 per year are available for post-secondary education and training. This program covers a vast array of school-related expenses and is available to foster care youth between the ages of 16-21 and to those who were adopted after age 16. Young people ages 21-23 also are eligible to receive funding if they were participating in the program at the time they turned age 21.

More information about these programs are available online.

STUDY HALL

Studying is not naturally easy. It is a skill that must be learned. No more sleeping on your book hoping to absorb the information, or hoping the test is cancelled. To get the maximum benefit from studying, you need to develop good habits. Here are a few tips to help you improve your ability to study:



Preparing to Study:

Snagging your spot!

Studying in a particular place can help improve your concentration. When choosing your study spot, ask yourself these questions:

- Is this space available for me to use whenever I need it?
- Will I be free from distractions and interruptions here?
- Is this space physically conducive (comfortable chair, spacious desk that is the correct height, adequate lighting, etc.) to studying?
- Does this spot have all the study materials (books, paper, pens, reference materials, computer, etc.) that I need?

Scribbling it down!

Taking good notes during class can vastly improve your ability to study.

- Keep your attention focused on what your teacher is saying – don't day dream or let your mind wander.
- Write neatly so you can easily read material later.
- Listen for "signal statements" that will alert you that what your teacher is about to say will be important. Examples of "signal statements" include phrases like:

- "A key factor that contributed to the Revolution was..."
- "Three things to remember when writing your essay are..."

- "Most experts agree that DNA analysis is limited by..."
- "The top three reasons to use long division are..."

- Be sure to write down information following "signal statements" in your notes.
- Also include in your notes any information that your teacher repeats or writes on a chalkboard.
- Use a highlighter or special notations (a star, etc.) in your notes to indicate important material, key concepts, etc.
- Group material by using paragraphs, bullets, indentations, etc.

Hit the refresh button please!

- Repeating material can help you remember it. After class is over, when the lesson is still fresh in your mind, rewrite your notes. Devoting attention to making abbreviations complete, or by explaining or describing notes for later use can make them easier to both use and remember. You also can make short sentences longer by adding comments or by adding some of the questions and answers involved in the discussion.

A Strategy for Reading Textbooks

- Use the SQRW strategy when reading and taking notes from your textbook. SQRW stands for "Surveying, Questioning, Reading and Writing." Using SQRW will help you to both understand what you read and create a written record of what you have learned. You can then use the record to participate in a class discussion and to help you study for tests. As you practice using SQRW, you will find that you learn more and have better notes to assist you both during and outside of class.

To learn more about SQRW and other ways to get organized for school visit these websites:

<http://www.lifeorganizers.com/home/students-get-organized.htm>
<http://www.how-to-study.com>



4 ways to learn more about VA-YAC

Independent Living Coordinator

Talk to your case worker or your local Independent Living Coordinator to learn more about VA-YAC and how you can get involved.

Email VDSS

Additional information about VA-YAC programs may be obtained through email by contacting the Virginia Department of Social Services at:
VA.ILP@dss.virginia.gov

Contact the VILP through mail

Virginia Independent Living Program
Virginia Department of Social Services
7 N. Eighth St.
Richmond, VA 23219-3319

Phone or Fax

Contacting the Virginia Department of Social Services Independent Living Program at:
Ph - (804) 726-7527
Fx - (804) 726-7499



Virginia Department of
Social Services
Fourth Floor
7 N. Eight St.
Richmond, VA 23219
Ph: 804.726.7521
Fx: 804.726.7499

Web: www.fyi3.com/vayac
Eml: VA.YAC@dss.virginia.gov

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VA-YAC Youth Officers 2006-2007
Summer 2006 Conference Electees:

Todd L.
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Joshua A.
Executive VP - Areas 1 & 2
Mitchell B.
Executive VP - Areas 1 & 2
Angela S.
Treasurer
Jonelle L.
Secretary
Mathew R.
Sergeant at Arms
Melvin W.
Historian



VA-YAC SPRING CONFERENCE!

"LOOKING BACK AND MOVING
FORWARD: VA-YAC PAST, PRESENT AND
FUTURE"

April 28-30, 2006, the Virginia Youth Advisory Council held its Spring Conference at the Holiday Inn Crossroads in Henrico, Virginia. The conference theme was "Looking Back and Moving Forward: VA-YAC Past, Present and Future." Thirty youth from across Virginia attended the conference that included quarterly celebrations and recognized participants who:

- Celebrated birthdays between January 1 and June 30, 2006
- Made the honor roll
- Improved his/her grades

In addition, VA-YAC had its annual induction ceremony for new members. Ten youth, who met membership requirements, were sworn in by Commissioner Anthony Conyers, Jr., Virginia Department of Social Services. New members pledged to impact positive outcomes for youth either in or aging out of Virginia's foster care system. The keynote address was delivered by the Hon. Richard D. Taylor, Jr., presiding judge at Richmond Manchester Circuit Court, 13th Judicial Circuit of Virginia. VA-YAC's newest members are:

- Todd L.
- Steven J.
- Chaniece B.
- Jonelle L.
- Matthew R.
- Olivia S.
- Randi M.
- Mitchell B.
- Angela S.
- Makonnen J.



Toward the end of the three-day conference, the youth and volunteer staff attended the Mystery Dinner Playhouse in Chesterfield County, Virginia. This was a fun, interactive play using audience participation in the plot. The element of surprise and drama kept everyone on the edge of their seat.

On the final day a closing ceremony was held. The youth had the opportunity to review pictures taken at the conference and received their appreciation certificate for attending.



SUMMER 2006 CONFERENCE

"This year at the VA-YAC summer conference I had a blast. Radford University is beautiful, peaceful and welcoming. The two campus guides were a great help and informative. The speakers were great," said one youth attendee.

The Virginia Youth Advisory Council (VA-YAC) held its summer conference, July 14-16, at Radford University, Radford, Virginia. This year's theme focused on the importance of education. Approximately 20 youth from across the Commonwealth attended the conference.



The conference included quarterly celebrations and recognized youth who:

- Celebrated birthdays in July, August or September of 2006
- Made the honor roll
- Improved his/her grade(s)
- Graduated from high school or a vocational/training program

During this time, youth were recognized, spent time socializing and enjoyed refreshments.

There were some awesome workshops taking place. On topics such as the College Search Process, Vocational Training, Community Colleges and Job Corps Information, Financial Aid, Scholarships, Grants, and Getting Organized for School.

During council session membership discussed issues and concerns affecting youth in foster care. This meeting was headed by the VA-YAC President and Voices for Virginia's Children representative Mary Schuring. The issues identified were:

- Education:
 - Education and Training Voucher Program
 - Increasing reimbursement for books
 - Covering cost of living for four-year universities
 - Transferring from school-to-school and SOL documentation
 - Varying SOL requirements from school-to-school
 - Documentation not being sent in a timely fashion to new schools foster youth are enrolled in.
 - HB 95/SB 656 (2006 session)—foster care youth may be declined enrollment if they committed a former felony and an alternative school may not be taking new students. Where will these students go to school?
- Independent Living—increasing the cost of living stipend
- Medicaid coverage for youth who left Foster Care Independent Living at age 18, but returned before reaching the age of 21. Medicaid cuts off at 21
- Expansion of Foster Care to 21 years of age for working individuals
- Increasing the clothing allowance
- Improving the placement stability by working more to keep youth in their communities
- Developing a tutorial program for foster care youth, at high school level and college level

A closing ceremony was held on the final day of the conference. Members hosted a fashion and talent show, and topped off with a dance. This event was a true treat for all who attended. The talent show included music, poetry, dance and more. A closing ceremony was held on the final day of the conference, and provided an opportunity to review pictures from the past few days, attendees also received appreciation certificates for the conference.



Available Funds for College

Once you've selected a school, you may think the hard part is over – until you realize you have to find a way to pay for it! No money tree growing outside your home? Not an heir to a huge fortune? Don't stress. There are programs in place to help pay for college. A few of the most common are listed below.

Pell Grant

A Pell Grant does not need to be repaid. Pell Grant eligibility is determined according to financial need, using a formula established by Congress. Funds are distributed by the colleges either by direct payments to the student or through a credit to a term bill or other account.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant does not need to be repaid. The FSEOG is more competitive than the Pell Grant, and priority goes to those also receiving Pell Grants who have the greatest financial need.

Perkins Loan

Federal Perkins Loans are low interest, need-based loans awarded by colleges. Loans are limited because under the program, each college is only given a limited amount of loan money to distribute. Those receiving Perkins Loans begin paying interest nine months after graduation.

Academic Competitiveness Grant

These grants are available to full time students who have completed a rigorous high school curriculum as determined by state and local agencies and recognized by the Secretary of Education. To receive the Academic Competitiveness Grant as a second year student, recipients must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA.

Federal Work-Study

The Federal Work-Study program was designed to encourage community service and work related to each student's particular course of study. Jobs can be either with the college or for a profit employer who has entered into a contract with the college.



Choosing a college involves more than selecting a school with letters that look great on a sweat shirt

College Search:

You're almost finished with high school – now what?

You are finishing high school, a major accomplishment. Congratulations! You'll soon be ready to embark on your next great endeavor – for many this includes going to college. Choosing a college can be very stressful, but also rewarding. Early planning, research and communication with guidance counselors and guardians is key. Choosing a college involves more than selecting a school with letters that look great on a sweat shirt; it's about finding a university or college that is a tailored fit. Determine what you are looking for in a school in terms of cost, location, size and what programs are offered to best suit your desired academic path. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Grades, grades, grades!
- Get involved in after school activities
- Work on improving your grades
- Take the PSAT
- Study for the SAT and/or ACT
- Visit area colleges
- Talk to your guidance counselor about your future plans
- Get recommendations from teachers
- Request college applications
- Double check your applications before mailing
- Enjoy high school, this is a terrific time of your life!

VIRGINIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

College of William and Mary
www.wm.edu
 George Mason University
www.ocpe.gmu.edu
 Hampton University
www.hamptonu.edu
 James Madison University
www.jmu.edu
 Longwood University
www.longwood.edu
 Mary Washington College
www.umw.edu
 Mary Baldwin College
www.mbc.edu
 Norfolk State University
www.nsu.edu
 Old Dominion University
www.odu.edu
 Radford University
www.radford.edu
 Randolph Macon College
www.rmc.edu
 University of Richmond
www.richmond.edu
 University of Virginia
uvace.virginia.edu
 Virginia Commonwealth University
www.vcu.edu
 Virginia Community Colleges
www.so.cc.va.us/vccsonline
 Virginia State University
www.vsu.edu
 Virginia Tech
www.vt.edu
 Virginia Union University
www.vuu.edu

OTHER AVENUES

A four-year college is not for everyone, this does not mean you're making a poor choice for your future. Many schools offer Vocational and Educational Training (VET) programs, also called Career and Technical Education (CTE), which prepare learners for careers that are traditionally non-academic and directly related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation training, in which the learner participates. It is sometimes referred to as - technical education, as the learner directly develops expertise in a particular technique or technology. Here are a few popular occupations and institutions that offer this training:

Craft and Construction

- Construction Drafting
- Construction Project Manager
- Heating/Air Conditioning
- Plumbing/Pipefitting Technician
- Precision Shielding
- Specialized Carpentry and Installation
- Specialized Interior Finishing and Installation

Health Occupations

- Dental Assistant
- Dental Hygienist
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Home Health Aide
- Licensed Practical Nurse
- Medical Laboratory Technician
- Medical Record Technician
- Optometric Technician
- Radiology Technician
- Surgical Technologist

Manufacturing

- Computer Controlled Equipment Operator
- Drafting Technician
- Electronics Engineering Technician
- Electronics Lab Technician
- Engineering Technician
- Manufacturing Systems Operator
- Manufacturing Technician

Service Occupations

- Accountant
- Agribusiness Sales
- Automatic Office Manager
- Commercial Design
- Computer Graphic Specialist
- Criminal Justice and Corrections
- Data Processing Manager
- Flight Attendant
- Firefighter
- Law Enforcement/Protection
- Library Technician
- Paralegal
- Professionally Trained Chef
- Specialty Auto Mechanic



Technical Service, Repair, and Installation

- Airframe Mechanic
- Avionics Repair Technician
- Biomedical Equipment Technician
- Computer Systems Installation and Repair
- Electromechanical Repair Technician
- Telecommunications Installation and Repair

VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

ECPI Technical College
www.ecpitech.edu

Medical Careers Institute
www.medical.edu

ITT Technical Institute
www.itt-tech.edu

Penn Foster Career School
www.pennfoster.edu

J. Sargeant Reynolds
www.jsr.cc.va.us

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV)

The ETV program assists foster care youth adopted after the age of 16 with post-secondary education and training expenses. It is designed to help youth aging out of foster care make the transition to self-sufficiency by helping them receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment. The program provides eligible youth with funding assistance in the form of vouchers for of up to \$5,000 per year per youth. The vouchers can be applied toward, but not limited to, colleges, universities, community colleges and one-year training institutions. For more information visit: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/education_training.html

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the next issue:

WINTER AND
PREPARING FOR THE
HOLIDAYS

What I learned from VA-YAC

VA-YAC had a lasting influence on me. I learned that our bad choices had dire consequences. I learned that temporary fun is not always as fun as you think when the next day comes. I learned a lot about the different laws out there for foster care and the different things that come first in our lives. I learned a lot about colleges and their requirements as well as how to obtain different financial aid for school. I also learned about all of the different alternatives to college such as job corps and technical schools. I learned a little about organization skills and how to avoid unnecessary stress.



-Nina O., VA-YAC Participant



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